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16 MAY 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, SECDEF

FROM:

  
Director of Information Services, DA

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SUBJECT:

Results of Task Force Effort to Support  
Prepublication Review Element of NSDD-84  
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1. To develop support for the prepublication review requirement in NSDD-84, a task force was created to review the writings of former government officials with access to SCI who had published writings not submitted for prepublication review. The Task Force was to look for classified information that had been disclosed because there was no prepublication review requirement. This was not considered to be a search for leaks, and for more on that point see paragraph 5c below. The Task Force was organized under the Office of Information Services (OIS), Directorate of Administration with additional support provided by the Directorates of Operations, Intelligence, and Science and Technology, and by the Office of Security. The Task Force was provided with a list, compiled by the National Security Council, of 536 writings published by former Government officials without the benefit of prepublication review. These included books, monographs, and articles in newspapers and journals. Before the Task Force could review all of this material and complete its work, the project was overtaken by events when implementation of NSDD-84 was suspended. This report of the Task Force results is being submitted for the record. (U)

2. The Task Force reviewed a total of 472 writings. This figure includes 423 articles that appeared in newspapers and other periodicals, 23 monographs published by various institutes, and 26 books. Of the 472 writings reviewed, only three were found to contain information that properly should have remained classified. One writing was an article that appeared in a scientific journal and the other two were books. The authors were a former

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Most of the sensitive information revealed should be protected at the SECRET level. Review of the material was coordinated with the National Security Council (NSC) and the Department of Defense (DOD). (U)

  
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4. None of the above compromises appear to be the initial revelation of a particular piece of information. Yet to all of those who read these items for the first time it will be news, and thus spread the knowledge of the compromise. This will be compounded by the fact that the three authors were formerly in high Government positions and experts in the field that

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they discuss. This gives great veracity to their words and worsens the damage that they can cause. It is this kind of constant hemorrhaging of our sensitive information bit by bit that feeds the perception already held by many, and that number is being added to every day, that the U.S. Government is unable to keep secrets and could be dangerous to work with where confidence and discretion are critical. (U)

5. Conclusions, based on the assumption that this was a representative sampling of published writings not submitted for prepublication review, were:

a. The amount of sensitive information that can be considered classified and compromised is extremely small.

b. The classified information appears in books and the more detailed articles that appear in journals rather than in articles that appear in the press.

c. We do not consider the classified information that we uncovered during this project to represent leaks, and we believe that the consideration of leaks should be kept entirely separate from the matter of prepublication review. Prepublication review concerns writings from known authors who, as CIA experience has shown, are generally agreeable to submitting their material before it is published and deleting sensitive material from it when requested to do so. This person is telling a story or offering judgments and opinions. The leaker is anonymous and reveals facts intended to achieve a specific and usually immediate objective. To lump the two groups together is to do a gross disservice to the legitimate author.

d. The persons revealing the classified information formerly held very high positions in the executive branch. These are the persons that one would normally expect to be models of discretion. Thus, it appears that if we require prepublication review it must cover everybody.

e. Do the results of this project support the argument for having prepublication review as proposed in NSDD-84? We believe that they do because so little information would have to be deleted. This means that reviews could be done quickly (they averaged 22 days in CIA in 1983); authors would be required to delete very little material from their manuscripts (almost 67 percent of the manuscripts submitted to CIA had nothing deleted in 1983, manuscripts on non-intelligence matters should have even less), and the requirement for prepublication review would send a message to the world at large that the executive branch is working to protect its secrets.

f. Should prepublication review be left voluntary? Experience has shown that the great majority of former officials will not write things that they believe are classified. As noted above, there is an occasional author who refuses to submit his manuscript for review. To handle that situation, there must be a way to penalize such persons

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when they publish classified information; otherwise, the system is meaningless. Whether they submit or not, authors can and do make mistakes in their judgment, and admittedly, much of the decision making in classification questions is subjective. It must be recognized that those still serving in the Government have the most current understanding of what has to be kept secret. They also are responsible to keep the secrets, and therefore are the only legitimate authority to declassify information. If they are to be mistrusted in that work, can former officials be trusted to write only unclassified information? (U)

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